

# NATIONAL EMERGENCY

## RESPONSE

Official Journal of the Australasian Institute of Emergency Services



A.I.E.S.

VOLUME 31 NO. 3 WINTER 2018

PRINT POST PUBLICATION NO. PP100018976



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*National Emergency Response* is published by  
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Level 2, 310 King Street, Melbourne  
GPO Box 2466, Melbourne 3001  
Ph: (03) 9937 0200  
Fax: (03) 9937 0201  
Email: [admin@cwaustral.com.au](mailto:admin@cwaustral.com.au)  
ACN: 30 086 202 093

#### EDITORIAL TEAM

Editor: Kristi High  
Associate Editor: Ron Jones LFAIES

Send articles for inclusion to:  
Email: [editor@aies.net.au](mailto:editor@aies.net.au)

#### WEBSITE

[www.aies.net.au](http://www.aies.net.au)

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# NATIONAL EMERGENCY RESPONSE



Official Journal of the Australasian Institute of Emergency Services

Winter 2018 • National Emergency Response

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# NEW MEMBERS

The Australasian Institute of Emergency Services is pleased to announce the following emergency services people joined the AIES between May and July 2018.

NAME	ORGANISATION	DIVISION
Michael Bennett	Life Saving Victoria	VIC
Edward Bennet	Westpac Little Ripper Lifesaver	QLD
Alexander Gillam	Ambulance Victoria	VIC
Andrew Hillman	Ambulance NSW	NSW
Wayne Pitt	SES/RFS	QLD
Scott Williams JP	Williams Protection	NSW
Jason Nye	SES	QLD
Philip Newlyn	StJA	NSW
Peter Rees	Gippsland Water	VIC

### Legend:

RFS – Rural Fire Service

SES – State Emergency Service

StJA –St John Ambulance



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# FROM THE PRESIDENT'S DESK

Steve Jenkins, FAIES

*National President*

The annual face-to-face meeting of the Board of Directors and Annual General Meeting (AGM) of the Australasian Institute of Emergency Services (AIES) was held in Brisbane on 19 and 20 May 2018.

I would like to thank all members who attended the AGM in person, or submitted apologies or proxies, and the directors and divisional representatives, in particular Victorian Member Allan Marshall for taking the minutes.

The following precis of discussions at the meeting and other matters was provided to members at the AGM by myself; and Independent Director Brett Aimers provided an update on the Strategic Reform Agenda (SRA).

At the annual meeting of the Board, the following changes to the category of members' membership were approved:

- Elevation to Fellow status:
  - Jim Pullen (NSW)
  - Neil Wright (Tas)
  - Doug Caulfield (Vic)
  - John Crennan (Vic)
- Elevation to Life Fellow:
  - Roger Halliday (SA).

My congratulations to these members, all very worthy of their respective status. I also thank them for their ongoing membership and support of the AIES, and their contribution to the various emergency services/management organisations with which they are involved.

My thanks on behalf of the organisation also to the following directors who, as of the AGM, concluded their current terms representing their respective Divisions:

- Scott Milne (ACT), who has also been Vice President for the past three years,
- Ron Jones (Tas), who has also been performing the role of sub-editor of the *National Emergency Response Journal* and will continue to do so.

Director for Membership Wayne Coutts has just finalised a new version of the AIES tiepin. This new version has years of membership included in five-year increments. Members may also have noticed enhanced functionality and reliability of the AIES website. This is

also due to Wayne's efforts. He has been instrumental in locating a new email and Internet service provider and transitioning the AIES' website pages and membership database onto the new server. My thanks to Wayne for his efforts, especially as they have been intertwined with his responsibilities as State Emergency Service Director for Far North Queensland where there have been a number of events recently.

A number of achievements have been made as the organisation progresses its Strategic Reform Agenda, including the subtle change in name from Australian to Australasian, and consolidation of the organisation's banking arrangements.

The Board has also approved a move towards skills-based Board membership. This will entail some Directors undergoing specialist company director training. The changes in banking arrangements have facilitated better, more streamlined, accounting procedures. As a result, the Board has elected to discontinue the role of treasurer at the divisional level.

The AIES rules will be amended in due course to replace the treasurer role as a core divisional management committee member with that of a divisional secretary. I would like to particularly thank AIES National Treasurer Jenny Crump (Qld) for her efforts while performing that role, and those who have assisted with the divisional treasurer role over the years.

At the AGM, I had great pleasure in presenting John Rice LFAIES with the AIES' highest award, the National Medal of Excellence.

John joined the AIES in 1988 and was elevated to Fellow in 2000. In 2009, John was appointed President of the organisation, and served as a Director until 2017. John served as an officer in the Queensland Police Service for 27 years before relocating to Canberra to become a national search and rescue coordinator with Australian Search and Rescue within the Australian Maritime Safety Authority. In later years as an AIES Director, John was the institute's webmaster, membership



database manager and social media officer. John is a very worthy recipient of the organisation's highest award.

I am also pleased to advise that a Divisional Management Committee has been re-established for South Australia as follows:

**President:** John McTier

**Vice President:** Rodger Halliday LFAIES

**Secretary:** Rebecca Hunt


**Committee members:** Shane Bolton, Adrian Brown and Stephen Hancock.

Directors Rod Young and Brett Aimers recently advised that they wished to discontinue their respective executive roles with the organisation. I thank them both for their contributions to AIES.

At the Board's July meeting (via teleconference), Ron Jones was appointed as the Director for Tasmania and Bob Maul for New South Wales and New Zealand, both having been duly nominated by their respective divisions. Both Ron and Bob have previously served terms on the National Board; Bob also being one of the Institute's founding members. Ron has previously represented Tasmania on the Board and is very active representing the Institute in Tasmania. Bob is also performing the role of Company Secretary. I welcome Ron and Bob to the Board.

On 5 July, I had the opportunity to attend the NSW Divisional Management Committee meeting in Sydney. In attendance also, as an observer, was Jim Pullen; one of the Institute's founding members 40 years ago. It was a privilege to use this an opportunity to present Jim with his 40-year membership certificate and thank him for his ongoing support of, and commitment to, the Institute. ●

More AGM news on page 17.



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## SUTHERLAND SHIRE FIRES

*SES members make safe a fire damaged tree that has been felled.*

*Article courtesy of The Volunteer Magazine (NSW SES VA)  
Photos by Mitch Brack, Daniel Kent and Kyle Riordan*

**H**opes of a relaxing Saturday afternoon off were quickly dashed for SES volunteers in the Sutherland Shire back in April when the area experienced its worst bushfires in over 15 years. After a busy morning training their new induction group in traffic safety and flood rescue awareness, coupled with eight storm jobs, members were just about ready to head home when word came through of a fire coming through the local army range.

SES crews immediately set about assisting their brothers and sisters in yellow and were quickly tasked to establish a boat link with several townships on the Georges River that had been isolated by the bushfire, as well as with providing logistics and incident management support from



*SES members out door-knocking in the Menai area.*

the fire control centres in Heathcote and Minto.

As the fire jumped Heathcote Road and made a run for the west of Menai SES resources were then quickly requested by police to support door-knocking efforts. Working through challenging conditions, including thick smoke, SES crews managed to door-knock nearly a hundred homes as suburban areas sustained heavy ember showers.

Over the next four days members from the four Sutherland Shire units, aptly supported by members from Bankstown, Bayside, Canterbury, Campbelltown, Hurstville, Kogarah and Marrickville units, continued to work tirelessly to support the ongoing fire efforts as well as manage an influx of storm jobs caused by the same 70kph winds that were driving the fire.





SES and Illawong RFS members working to clear downed trees from a fire trail.



Cronulla 35 conducting road clearing operations on Heathcote Road.



Heathcote 36 supporting RMS traffic control operations.



SES resources from multiple SSR units staging at Menai Unit following operations in the Alfords Point area.

During the course of the bushfire operation SES crews demonstrated their skills across a wide range of the specialist capabilities offered by the service, including:

- **Chainsaw operations** – clearing access to fire trails and assisting RMS with reopening roads.
- **Flood boat operations** – assisting with transportation of personnel and equipment to isolated river communities.
- **Aviation operations** – providing qualified operators at airbase and air desk level.
- **Incident management** – providing personnel to the EOC and FCC.
- **Public information** – establishing and manning community information points and supporting community meetings.
- **Logistics support** – assisting with transportation, catering and communications support.

Throughout this SES members continually represented the best attributes of the service in delivering our core mission of saving lives and protecting communities. Their efforts were highly appreciated by the Rural Fire Service, LEOCON and other members of the EOC who had high praise for the capabilities offered. ●



# SHOTS FROM WOW DAY

Article courtesy of the NSW SES [www.ses.nsw.gov.au](http://www.ses.nsw.gov.au)

Whether it's tarping roofs in howling winds, rescuing people and animals from floods, attending serious road accidents or searching for missing people, not an hour goes by where an SES volunteer is not helping someone in times of emergency.

The NSW State Emergency Service has over 9000 volunteers who give up their time to train for and respond to emergencies and natural disasters – 24 hours a day, seven days a week. They are the lifeblood of communities across NSW and indeed Australia, and last year responded to over 32,000 requests for assistance.

"We are proud to partner with the NSW SES to support volunteers and empower local communities to build resilience and protect themselves from severe weather. WOW Day is a fantastic initiative to recognise SES volunteers and we encourage everyone to wear something orange to show their appreciation," said Ms Cobby of NRMA Insurance.

"The mission of our Service is *saving lives and protecting communities* and we live and breathe that mission every day of the year," said Commissioner Smethurst. ●





# AWARDS AND ACCOLADES

## CHRIS DRAFFIN MAIES

### AUSTRALIA DAY

Tasmanian AIES Member Chris Draffin was awarded the Emergency Service Medal in this year's Australia Day Honours.

Chris came to Tasmania SES with extensive experience as a member of the Northern Territory emergency service.

He championed the co-location of the Tasmanian Fire Service and SES in St Helens, and was instrumental in leading members through this and other changes.

Chris is a strategic thinker and has made significant improvements to his SES unit and the community.

Chris has also been part of the recent formation of the Tasmanian SES Volunteer Association and was elected State President. Chris is now a member of the Southern Regional SES Unit.



## ROBERT BUTTERFIELD MAIES

### NATIONAL RESCUE COMPETITION

Tasmania West Coast member Robert Butterfield MAIES was one of the judges at the National Rescue Competition at South Arm near Hobart recently. Robert is a highly skilled emergency service volunteer and is currently the SES Unit Manager at Queenstown. Robert is also involved with the fire, ambulance and mine rescue services at Queenstown. Thanks also to AIES members Roger Brown FAIES and Neil Wright MAIES for helping with the competition.



## NEIL WRIGHT FAIES

### MACKONIS PERPETUAL AWARD

Neil Wright FAIES, Tasmanian Board Member and past Secretary, took out the inaugural John Mackonis Perpetual Award.

John Mackonis was a Fellow of the AIES who passed away last year. In memory of John, the Southern Regional SES Unit established the award to honour his outstanding contributions to the Tasmanian SES and his community.

Neil has made himself available numerous times behind the scenes helping management, doing tasks such as vehicle movement, collection and return of communication equipment, and maintaining the command bus.

He is rarely missing from any event and has always promoted the Southern Regional Unit.

Congratulations on winning the John Mackonis Perpetual Award and on becoming a Fellow of the AIES this year.





# POSTCARDS FROM HAWAII

By **Bill Hoyles, MAIES**

*NSW SES Canada Bay*



## POSTCARD FROM THE BIG ISLAND OF HAWAII

I flew into Hawaii's Big Island from Honolulu for a one-day visit in June. I immediately jumped into a rented white Jeep with black roof, that spoke to Jurassic Park, and headed for the Hawai'i Volcanoes National Park where the Kilauea Volcano was erupting.

Close to the park's entrance I stopped off at the town of Volcano which survives from visiting tourists, only to find the Volcano Visitor Centre unmanned, but the wash and dry laundromat and the general store was open for a few customers.

The last of these offered us complimentary locally-grown lychees as it was the picking season but no

one was buying. Business was hurting because the nearby entrance to the national park was roadblocked, meaning there was no tourist trade. There was also no view of the volcano.

From Volcano we drove down and across to the township of Pahoa, close (but not too close) to where the lava from Fissure 8 was hitting the ocean creating a massive continuous cloud of vog – a word commonly used in the Hawaiian islands that is derived from 'volcano', 'fog' and 'smog'.

Vog is formed when lava hits sea water and comprises a mixture of sulphur dioxide, oxygen, water vapour and other gases that can cause irritation to the skin, eyes, nose and throat.

Pahoa contained a mixture of evacuated buildings, recognised by the 'no trespassing' signs and local businesses determined to survive.

We stopped for lunch and walked down the road past a shop having a 'Lava Evac 10% off Sale' and onto the Naturopathic Medicine Centre with

its 'Breathe Easy Vog Clinic'. Both had refused to evacuate ahead of the danger from the toxic vog cloud, with the clinic and other businesses proudly displaying the words 'WE STAY!'

I had read that the Pahoa community hall and land adjacent was being used as an evacuation centre and camping ground for those who had lost their homes or decided to leave the more dangerous areas. We passed the centre but did not access it or take photos out of respect for their privacy. I was reminded of that at the last evacuation centre I had visited closer to home in Murwillumbah, NSW, after the floods.

Around the corner, we reached the main highway leading to where the lava was hitting the ocean – only to find a roadblock manned by the Hawaii Army National Guard and Police. Donning my NSW SES 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary cap I took time out to ask for a photo opportunity with the National Guardsmen. They were both shy, and







reluctant to leave their post, until the cops offered to take over traffic control while they took time out for a photo shoot. We first gathered under their shade cover and then moved across to their high-clearance camouflage painted vehicle.

In the background, the massive plume of vog was readily visible – but the still photos that I took did not do justice to the incredible volume of vog being created. Time-lapse photography gave an incredible perspective of the output as the river of lava hit the sea – truly ‘breathtaking’ in every sense of the word.

On the way back I encountered a local character on a bicycle with a rooster hitching a ride in the shopping basket at the front. Chatting about the volcano he told us that we could see the lava flow from October 2014 adjacent to the town’s recycling facility a kilometre up the road. On viewing it, I was amazed to see how close it had come to wiping out the town, and yet four years on there were ferns shooting up in the middle of the lava. It reminded me of the new growth after bushfires.

I never did get to see the volcano itself – although its fiery glow was clearly visible from the Hawaiian Airlines jet as we flew out that night.

**Postscript:** While idyllic and beautiful, there are social issues on the Big Island. We had afternoon drinks near the Puka Puka Kitchen where I observed in their window display signage from the Hawaiian Meth Project of a rice cooker with the slogan *Cook Rice not Ice*. Lying on the ground nearby was a local screaming incoherently – whether mentally ill or suffering an ice-induced psychotic episode we could only guess. A local shop owner who evidently knew him was trying to calm his fears – but for the screaming man it was a case of Paradise Lost.



### POSTCARD FROM WAIKIKI BEACH

Waikiki has one of the most famous surfing beaches in the world and like most surf beaches it is regularly patrolled by lifeguards. There are several lifeguard towers located along the beach and City and County of Honolulu Ocean Safety and Lifeguard vehicles strategically parked nearby in the shade of the palm trees.

It came as somewhat of a surprise, when a real life emergency unfolded on the beach adjacent to Waikiki Lifeguard Tower 2B, to see that one of the vehicles responding was the giant Ladder 7 Waikiki together with a Honolulu Emergency Services Department Paramedic Unit. Even more surprising, to my uninformed eyes, was the fact that this massive fire response vehicle carried rescue surfboards attached to its ladder. We could see that this particular medical emergency included a cardiac arrest, and that CPR was being performed, but we decided not to add to the gathering crowd.

It occurred to me afterwards that perhaps Ladder 7 Waikiki just happened to be available nearby and that this was not a normal response. However a few days later we were walking past arguably the most famous surf bar and restaurant in the USA, Duke’s Bar and Grill, when Honolulu Fire Department Ladder 2-T arrived under lights and sirens, closely followed by HFD Engine 5 Kaimuki and

then a paramedic unit. The firemen jumped out, carrying what appeared to be a Packer-wacker, and entered Duke’s. They were followed a short time later by two paramedics with stretcher and first aid gear, and then a further two paramedics joined them. Perhaps 10 minutes later all of the emergency responders left without a patient in sight – either a false alarm or a job well done!



### POSTCARD FROM WAHIAWA

*Never heard of the place*, I hear you say, and I must confess neither had I. Wahiawa is in the north of Oahu Island, Hawaii, and it was by pure chance that we just happened to get stuck there en route to a planned close encounter with Hawaiian green turtles at Turtle Bay. Driving our hire car along mostly clear roads we had taken a comfort break and shared barbecued corn at the Dole Pineapple Plantation when all hell broke loose as multiple fire tenders headed up the road in our direction of travel.

Continuing our journey north we encountered a long line of slow moving traffic that was clearly not going anywhere soon. It was an out-of-control bushfire. We were time-limited and so it appeared likely that our visit to Turtle Bay would be doomed to fail.

Looking for a convenient spot to make a U-turn we pulled over beside other parked cars and noticed a small number of tourists on the beach and were delighted to discover that there were green turtles in the ocean closeby.

Not only were they clearly visible on the beach – but most amazing was how the sun silhouetted multiple turtles in the breaking waves.

The safety of the turtles was being monitored by a mother and son from the Hawaii Wildlife Fund who were ensuring that tourists did not stand in front of turtles that were exiting the water. Once the turtles had settled to bask, the two roped off an area around each turtle to keep tourists at least five metres clear.

These beautiful creatures are now an endangered species and many are suffering from a disease, with the unpronounceable name of fibropapillomatosis, that is the subject of ongoing research worldwide to discover both a cause and a cure. ●



# PARAMEDIC PEDAL POWER

Queensland Ambulance Service (QAS) has put pedal to the pavement when it comes to attending to emergencies in and around Brisbane by rolling out its tried and tested Bicycle Response Team (BRT) to attend to incidents at major events, festivals and celebrations.

The concept of BRT officers was trialled on the Gold Coast late last year to respond to incidents on the popular tourist strip and prepare for the influx of visitors during the 2018 Commonwealth Games.

BRT officers treat patients who do not require transportation to hospital and provide initial care until other resources arrive for those who do need further medical assistance.

The Gold Coast team comprised of seven members who worked in teams of two covering a 10-hour shift.

Before starting, the team trained with Queensland Police Services' experienced bike squad to learn bicycle maintenance, and riding techniques and skills.

Since February, the Brisbane BRT has responded to incidents in parklands, shopping precincts and private residences in the CBD, Fortitude Valley, Spring Hill and South Brisbane.

QLD Minister for Health and Ambulance Services Steven Miles said



the team had strengthened ambulance resources.

"The team has a unique ability to quickly access areas that can often be difficult for vehicles to get to, like malls, parklands, pedestrian only precincts and high traffic zones," he said.

"This is about keeping residents and visitors safe during the day-to-day hustle and bustle of the city and during big

events like New Year's Eve and sporting matches."

QAS Commissioner Russel Bowles said the success of the BRT trial on the Gold Coast was the impetus for the rollout in Brisbane.

"The team on the Gold Coast has been able to respond to many cases within a matter of minutes by using bikeways, paths and malls to beat the traffic," he said.





"The Brisbane team is operating in a similar way – utilising the many bike lanes and river crossings to respond to cases.

"We had an overwhelming response from paramedics wanting to be a part of this team and all five selected are keen cyclists with a history of competitive racing."

The team rides hardtail mountain bikes with safety livery and lighting with a primary response kit that includes an

automatic external defibrillator, advanced airway kit and major/minor trauma kit.

A customised support vehicle fitted out with extra equipment allows the officers to be deployed to other areas when required.

"The BRT adds to the suite of services Brisbane residents and visitors have access to including ambulance, emergency response vehicles, local-area

assessment and referral units, specialist transport and retrieval unit, the high acuity response unit, patient transport service and aeromedical resources," Mr Bowles said.

The Brisbane BRT comprises five officers who also work in teams of two in 10 hour shifts every day of the week, and have trained with the Queensland Police Service.

The team are riding hardtail mountain bikes equipped with safety livery and lighting and our paramedics will respond with a primary response kit that includes an automatic external defibrillator (AED), advanced airway kit and major/minor trauma kit.

"A customised support vehicle fitted out with extra equipment will allow the officers to be deployed to other areas if required."

The BRT trained with Queensland Police's experienced Bike Squad in October, learning bicycle maintenance and riding techniques and skills. ●

# VOLUNTEERING CONFERENCE SNIPPETS

By Bill Hoyles, MAIES

NSW SES Canada Bay



I recently attended the bi-annual National Volunteering Conference at the International Conference Centre, Darling Harbour in Sydney thanks to a scholarship provided by the Australian Department of Home Affairs.

There were 650 delegates from every state and territory, as well as 10 exhibitors including my own agency, NSW SES.

The program began with a formal Welcome to Gadigal Land, by Chair of the Metropolitan Local Aboriginal Land Council Yvonne Weldon, followed by an emotive keynote speech delivered by Dr Susan Alberti, who did not leave a dry eye in the house.

Susan was born in Victoria where her father was a police officer and Australian Rules Football umpire who volunteered with St Vincent de Paul charity in his spare time. She married Angelo in the late 1960s, a non-English speaking Italian migrant, who on arrival in Australia had an attack of appendicitis when walking down the gangplank; and Susan promptly learned to speak and cook Italian.

Together, the couple built a successful building business employing 400 staff before Angelo was critically injured in a hit and run car accident in 1995. Three days later, she held him in her arms as his life support was switched off.

Her only daughter Danielle then decided to travel to the USA to study for her Masters, having kept hidden from her mother that she had been diagnosed with type 1 diabetes. Danielle became sick in the USA and needed a kidney transplant. Susan flew to the USA, was found to be compatible, made arrangements to donate her kidney, but sadly, Danielle died in her arms on the flight home.

Susan refused to give up. Determined to keep her building business functioning, Susan studied hard and became the first female licensed builder in Victoria. She then focused her efforts on her three passions – building

projects, research into type 1 diabetes and all things Aussie Rules Football.

Susan is a philanthropist who has poured time and money into these three loves; she built several nursing homes (because she was unimpressed by the one her mother went into), funded diabetes research, and enabled the elite Australian Football League Women's to flourish.

"I went to a meeting and they were down in the dumps and so I pulled out my cheque book and funded a development officer for three years," she said.

As her talk ended, there was a spontaneous standing ovation followed by questions from the floor. The first questioner noted that many in her row were still wiping away tears; such was the impact of her story. The chuckle of the day though came when Susan was asked what drove her to overcome such heartbreaking setbacks and challenges. Her response was eloquent: "I guess I'm like the Energizer Bunny," she said. "You just can't stop me."

This was a hard act to follow for the next plenary speaker Acting Assistant Secretary of Home Affairs in Australia Joe Buffone, but he certainly gave it a shot. Joe covered many aspects of volunteering including the dollar (and other) values of volunteering, where people volunteer, professionalism, the emergency management volunteer landscape, the digital community and sustaining volunteerism.

He also covered the barriers to retention raised in research by many volunteers: "*burdensome admin requirements, out-of-pocket expenses, and lack of flexibility*", as well as a need for "*trust, leadership, and inclusion*".

Finally, he noted the emergence of spontaneous volunteers such as the Brisbane Mud Army who are characterised by words that drive fear into the hearts of many established emergency management agencies: '*self-deployed*' and '*unconstrained*'.

Indeed the rise of '*spontaneous volunteering*', and the challenges faced in responding, became a major theme of the conference.

In the afternoon, the group of attendees split into four groups. I chose the emergency management stream, where National Manager, Emergency Services of Australian Red Cross and Chair of the Australian Emergency Management Volunteer Forum Andrew Coghlan introduced the topic.

Andrew paid tribute to forum member General Hori Howard AO, MC, ESM who he described as "pivotal to driving the agenda". Coincidentally, General Howard was Director General of NSW SES when I joined in April 1999, just before the Newcastle earthquake.

The focus of the presentation was a reflection on the changing world of volunteering and specifically the estimated 500,000 emergency volunteers. He showed an interesting video from Cyclone Yasi (February 2011, northern Queensland). A local designated emergency shelter was deemed too risky by a Red Cross volunteer with local knowledge, who made a brave decision to bypass it in favour of hunkering down with her evacuees in a sturdier brick primary school. The destruction that followed of the first evacuation centre was plain to see.

The next speaker was Dr Judy Esmond on the topic of volunteer retention and the factors of time, training, cost, recognition and people, followed by an unscheduled appearance from Troy Davies from the Queensland Fire and Emergency Service.

These factors were described as follows:

**Time** – requires a clear expectation of the time commitment up front at recruitment stage, so that people can choose the agency that best matches their availability.

**Training** – looked at the concept of shared knowledge and access across agencies of available training.

**Cost** – included the lack of tax deductibility for volunteers' costs.







**Recognition** – featured the importance of employers providing emergency services leave.

**People** – considered the option of a centralised recruitment hub for emergency service and emergency management volunteers that could encapsulate the above.

Our group then turned to a macro view of volunteering. Executive Director/Chief Strategy Officer of US-based not-for-profit organisation Realized Worth Chris Jarvis led us through the workings of the UN Sustainable Development Goals, Impact 2030 (of which he is a Board Member), *removing barriers to corporate volunteering and the concept of neural plasticity*.

I am 69 years' old, and was once young (defined now by the UN as 16-30 years' old) so the next session on young volunteers in emergency management was a bit of a wake-up call.

The panel comprised: Marcus Collingnon, a final year paramedic and RFS and marine rescue volunteer; Edward Anstee, a registered nurse and St John Ambulance volunteer; Alysha Springett from Team Recon Australia and RFS volunteer; and Ainslee Mulquiny who is studying a Bachelor of Policing and volunteers with NSW SES.

Some of their comments that resonated with me were around the importance of the message, which was illustrated by a YouTube video about changing the message on a blind man's begging poster from *I am blind please help me to It's a beautiful day and I can't see it*. This aligns with reasons for young people volunteering which accounts for personal satisfaction (40%), giving back (30%), work experience (17%) and new skills (13%).

The panel discussed:

- The impact of social media relevant to youth

- Rank structure should not lead to dismissal of younger views
- Young people needing faster and quicker courses
- Flexible volunteering models
- Expectations of longevity in volunteering
- Pressures to move from paper-based to electronic technology.

The emergency management group discussion and activities dominated day two by looking at:

- Disaster resilience and the Australian Disaster Resilience Handbook
- Spontaneous volunteering – a term coined after the September 11 bombings in New York
- Providing a good volunteer experience after some basic training
- Moving away from minimum attendance requirements (eg NSW SES)
- The catch phrase 'no one can do everything but everyone can do something'
- 'Just in time' training that is best done in peacetime and not when an emergency happens
- Knowledge hub
- The Australian Journal of Emergency Management clickable disaster map.

Returning to the larger conference, discussions were held about changes to economy, work and culture such as the loss of the 'nine to five' workday, and how many people will have five careers in their lifetime – but nothing will replace people in volunteering.

One last highlight from the conference was a real, live evacuation of the International Convention Centre auditorium during our conference that contained about 100 emergency volunteers. Here is how it unfolded:

1. The evacuation warning was barely audible in the large conference auditorium.
2. The staff evacuated us all up the stairs from the auditorium and then down the escalators from the building – when there were two accessible emergency exits clearly marked at the bottom of the auditorium.

Admittedly, the danger may have affected the use of those exits but it just seemed a strange happening. NSW Fire and Rescue responded under lights and sirens, but it seems it was a false alarm as we were back in session very soon afterwards. ●

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# AGM WRAP-UP



*National Board of Directors at work.*



## AIES annual face-to-face meeting and Annual General Meeting

**Brisbane**  
19-20 May 2018

Next year's annual face-to-face meeting will be held in Adelaide on 30 and 31 March 2019. The AGM will be conducted on Saturday 30 March commencing at 6.30pm. A venue will be advised in due course.



*AIES National Board of Directors.*



*AIES President Steve Jenkins addresses the AGM.*



*Colin Cunningham receiving the AIES National Award of Excellence at the Tasmanian Fire and Emergency Service Conference for his outstanding service to the Tasmanian Fire Service, Gretna Fire Brigade, Volunteer Associations and his Community.*



*Rod Young receiving the Give your Service a Plug Award as guest speaker the National AGM.*



*John Rice receiving the National Medal of Excellence from President Steve Jenkins in recognition of his contribution to the Institute over many years including National President, Director, Membership Officer as well as establishing our data base.*



# THE NEW RECRUITS

**WARNING:** This story is likely to pull at the heart strings.  
For anyone experiencing PTSD please contact: Lifeline – **13 11 14** beyondblue - **1300 22 4636**





Nick Bell has been a fire officer with the Northern Territory Fire and Rescue Service for more than 25 years. He has two significant passions – motor vehicle accident prevention and White Ribbon – and an emerging interest in using real-life experience to create compelling stories that depict bravery amongst our emergency services officers and the horror they often face when attending to incidents. Here, Nick uses his creative writing flair to follow a day in the life of two new recruits and the unpredictable nature of building fires.

By Nicholas (Nick) Bell



*Watch Commander, Northern Territory Fire Rescue Service – Operations*

It seemed like an eternity before the Fire Attack Team One had reached the eighth floor but now here they were, heaving to catch their breath and gripping the railings to steady themselves. To sprint up eight flights of stairs with full firefighting gear on was a task only for the fittest of the fit. Heavy protective clothing, boots, helmet and 16 kilograms of breathing apparatus on their backs conspired to weigh them down and exhaust them. The team had also brought with them all the equipment and break-and-enter tools they thought would be needed for the task ahead.

Their officer had ordered them to gain access to the eighth floor via the stairwell, fight the fire, and rescue the trapped office worker. Sounded pretty simple and straightforward when they were briefed on the ground floor but right now, as they stood in the stairwell, the fire waited for them on the other side of the door. Their hearts raced and not just because of the physical strain.

The fire had been burning for a while and had engulfed most of the large office area. It was alive and dancing as if enjoying and delighting in its destructive power, spreading in every direction, laying waste to everything in its path. And the heat, the enormous heat of the fire that radiated out in all directions, soaked up and absorbed the energy of every object that came near it. The fire glowed red and orange, throbbing at its heart, crackling as if laughing, waiting for the young firefighters to enter the room, and suck the life out of them too.

A fire is defined as a rapid chemical reaction producing heat, smoke and

light in varying degrees. Flame needs three essential things to allow it to live, eat, move and to breathe. It needs fuel, oxygen and a heat source.

Once it gets going, it has its self-perpetuating heat source to hunt for fuel if it can breathe well enough in its environment. Fire will spread in all directions, radiating its evil and consuming everything in its way. It does not discriminate but pounces on and wrings the life out of everything it possibly can to feed its insatiable hunger.

The more it is fed, the hungrier it becomes, like a burning cancer. It is the consummate athlete and can jump effortlessly left or right. It can sprint with great speed or run long distances, easily leaping over almost any obstacle. Like a cunning predator it can even surround and close in on its victims, cutting off escape routes. But none of those are its greatest talents.

By far its ability to spread upward with ruthless efficiency is its most awful trick. A fire is hottest at the top of the flame and the heat it produces causes the super heated gasses to rise in great convection currents. These currents of massive heat can leap upwards two or three or even 10 floors on a building, take hold burning up and down, trapping its prey.

And firefighters.

It was into this hell that the young firefighters in the fire-isolated stairwell found themselves. The two new recruits were fearful and excited as to what lay in wait for them on the other side of the door. This is what they had trained for. All those hard months of dedicated

study, commitment and effort had now come down to this. A moment in time where all the lessons learned over the past four months in training were condensed into the here and now.

With that final thought, the two firefighters looked at each other, and nodded as their gloved hands pulled down the red-hot door handle. The door flew back towards them under the thermal pressure the fire had generated inside and they both rocked back from the force. It made them gasp for breath in their facemasks. The scene that greeted them was like one from hell. The roaring and screaming of the fire was deafening, a horrible and deadly noise as if it were welcoming the firefighters to engage and challenge it, goading them into battle. It had gripped the contents of the room, strangling the life out of them, turning them to ash before moving on to its next fuel source.

The firefighters knew the office worker they had come to save was trapped in an office on the far right of the room and away from the main body of the fire so he was still alive, but they would have to move fast.

By now, he would be starving of oxygen and the fire would reach him before long. Keeping low, they moved into the room to confront the monster they had come to fight and opened the nozzle on their hose to a fog pattern. As the water hit the fire, it screamed in protest, swirling around and away from the firefighters, its fingers of death reaching left and right in an attempt to cut them off. The roar was deafening

*continued on page 20*



as the two brave firefighters advanced towards their goal.

This was to be a fast and frantic ‘snatch and grab’ rescue with their priority being to save the office worker’s life. The firefighters moved fast, pushing the fire back, stumbling over the obstacles on the floor, blinded by the intense, thick and toxic smoke.

The radiated heat from the fire was taking a toll on the Attack Team despite their fitness. It was sapping the life out of them and they knew they needed to move fast, faster than they were now as time was running out for them all – firefighter and victim alike.

The team made their way to where they knew the office worker would be. There they made a final stand against the roaring, monstrous beast they had come to fight. Squatting down on one knee, they gave the fire everything they had by varying the water pattern on the nozzle from fog to jet, hitting the heart of the fire, trying to wound it and get it to retreat just long enough to get the victim and themselves out and into fresh air.

They tried the door on the office but it was jammed shut. The Attack Team knew what to do and wasted no time in wielding the huge sledgehammer, smashing the handle and sending the door flying open. The two members of Attack Team One burst into the office and could see a crumpled form on the

ground, unconscious and not moving. This was their target, their mission objective – to rescue this person and get him to safety. Their hearts now beat faster. They looked at each other. If they were exhausted now, then fighting their way back past the raging fire, back to the fire-isolated stair with this man over their shoulders would really test their collective strength, determination and will.

It was now or never. With the help of his partner, the second member of the Attack Team heaved, strained and wrestled the dead weight of the victim onto his shoulders. It would be up to his partner to lead the way and fight their way out to the exit and to the stairwell, which would deliver them back to the ground floor and ultimate safety. With a nod of their heads, they went back into the inferno and into hell. The lead member blasted the fire that by this time had re-intensified and was coming at them vigorously. It was attempting to cut off their retreat and had taken hold of the room, radiating its killing heat more brutally than before. The team was moving fast now, stumbling, almost falling, but focussing on the exit, praying for a lucky break, hoping that the water in the hose would hold the beast back just long enough to get to safety.

And there they were – the door to freedom!

With an almighty shove, Attack Team One and their rescued victim spilled through the exit door and onto the landing in the fire-isolated stairwell. The leader slammed the door shut just as the fire made one last attempt to reach through the opening in an effort to snatch the life out of all three of them. Gulping for precious air, lungs bursting and leg muscles screaming, the Attack Team One did not stop. They moved down the stairs sharing the heavy weight of the rescued man. After a few minutes they reached the ground floor and burst through the final exit door into the waiting arms of the rest of the fire teams on the street. Safe now and completely exhausted both mentally and physically, they collapsed in the rest area and took their breathing apparatus, heavy firefighting gear and helmets off.

The first member of Attack Team One looked at his partner. She had done a great job and proved herself in the heat of battle. This incident had tested them both to their very limits and they had met the challenge. They both looked at each other and in that moment knew that the job satisfaction they now felt was never there in any of the careers they had had before this.

The Fire Officer walked up to them both.

“Get your gear on, you’re going back in,” he said. ●



# VFFA response to the NSW Upper House inquiry into bullying and harassment in the NSW emergency services

The Volunteer Fire Fighters Association (VFFA) President Mick Holton says he is encouraged by the release of the NSW Upper House report, entitled *Emergency Services Agencies NSW*.

The report focused heavily upon bullying and harassment in the NSW emergency services.

"The report confirms what many NSW Rural Fire Service (RFS) volunteers have known for a long time – that bullying, harassment and abuse of power is occurring in the RFS," said Mr. Holton.

"The VFFA recognises the courage of RFS volunteers and salaried staff in coming forward and working with the Portfolio Committee No. 4 – Legal Affairs, during this Upper House inquiry.

"Volunteering with the RFS should be non-threatening, respectful, safe and free from all forms of bullying and harassment.

"All volunteers have the right not to be bullied or discriminated against in the RFS.

"We are pleased to continue to lead and to participate in efforts to support volunteers who have suffered bullying and harassment in the RFS and will continue to challenge and call out this unacceptable behaviour," he said.

The VFFA welcomes the release of the report and calls on the NSW Government and the RFS to adopt all the recommendations of the Upper House inquiry into Emergency Service Agencies NSW.

## MAJOR REFORM IS REQUIRED

This report, along with the recent Bega Valley Fires Independent Review (the Keilty Review), clearly highlights the need for urgent reform.

Some key areas of the report were:

**Recommendation 1** – That the NSW Government establish an independent, external complaints management oversight body for workplace bullying, harassment and discrimination.

**Recommendation 11** – That the NSW Rural Fire Service implement an independent and impartial process, utilising an external person or organisation, for the election of senior brigade officers.

**Recommendation 13** – That the NSW Rural Fire Service review the processes and criteria in place for considering requests for legal assistance by volunteers and staff, to ensure that this support is provided in all appropriate cases.

**Recommendation 14** – That the NSW Government and the NSW Rural Fire Service review the undoubted benefits of relocating the NSW Rural Fire Service Headquarters to a regional city, while ensuring that any such relocation prioritises the effectiveness and safe operation of the headquarters.

## EXCELLENT OPPORTUNITY FOR NSW EMERGENCY SERVICE AGENCIES

The VFFA strongly urges the NSW Government to reconsider the relocation of the NSW Rural Fire Service Headquarters to a regional city in a way that links the recommendations of the Bega Valley Fires Independent Review (single, civilianised call and dispatch centre) and recommendation 11.

The VFFA makes the following suggestions for consideration:

**1.** That the NSW Government establishes an independent, external complaints management oversight body for workplace bullying, harassment and discrimination as a matter of urgency.

**2.** That the NSW Government expands the relocation of the NSW RFS Learning and Development Section to Dubbo to include the relocation of the entire NSW Rural Fire Service Headquarters also to Dubbo.

**a.** There are sufficient property resources available in Dubbo.

**b.** This dovetails nicely with the decentralisation of other emergency service operations including the joint

VRA and SES facility at Dubbo airport.

**c.** This move makes the proposed new NSW Rural Fire Service Headquarters premises available for the development of a single, civilianised call and dispatch centre.

**3.** That the NSW Government develops the premises located at 4 Murray Rose Avenue at Sydney Olympic Park (previously set aside for the NSW Rural Fire Service Headquarters, made available after the move to Dubbo). This development should be focused upon it becoming the state-wide emergency services call and dispatch centre.

This development can be made in a way that engages existing call centre workers from all agencies (no one needs to lose their job).

Civilians can be engaged in the first contact with incoming calls and initiate dispatch.

Agency representatives (existing operators) can be consulted at various levels of incident management from phone calls, radio operations and strategic operational decision-making.

**4.** The NSW Government is then in a good position to develop a single fire service with two key directorates under a single Fire Service Commissioner:

**a.** Urban, and

**b.** Rural.

**5.** The new NSW Rural Fire Service Headquarters at Dubbo will then become the headquarters for the Rural Directorate.

The VFFA President is happy to expand on any of these recommendations.

Please contact:

**VFFA President**

Mick Holton on 0428 985 468 or

**VFFA Vice President**

Brian Williams on (02) 4567 0216 or

**VFFA Media Officer**

Jon Russell on 0407 242 570

Please visit the VFFA website

for additional information at

**[volunteerfirefighters.org.au](http://volunteerfirefighters.org.au)**





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Unit 102, 141-143 Elizabeth St, Sydney, NSW 2000  
Ph: (08) 8347 2126 Mobile: 0401 996 432  
Email: [secretary@aies.net.au](mailto:secretary@aies.net.au)  
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## AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL TERRITORY

The Secretary – ACT Division of Australasian Institute of Emergency Services. PO Box 504, Civic Square, ACT 2601  
Email: [secretary.act@aies.net.au](mailto:secretary.act@aies.net.au)

## NEW SOUTH WALES AND NEW ZEALAND

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Email: [secretary.nsw@aies.net.au](mailto:secretary.nsw@aies.net.au)

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Email: [secretary.qld@aies.net.au](mailto:secretary.qld@aies.net.au)

## SOUTH AUSTRALIA

The Secretary – SA Division of Australasian Institute of Emergency Services. PO Box 10530, Adelaide Business Centre, SA 5000  
Email: [secretary.sa@aies.net.au](mailto:secretary.sa@aies.net.au)

## TASMANIA

The Secretary – TAS Division of Australasian Institute of Emergency Services. PO Box 1, Lindisfarne, TAS 7015  
Email: [secretary.tas@aies.net.au](mailto:secretary.tas@aies.net.au)

## VICTORIA

The Secretary – VIC Division of Australasian Institute of Emergency Services. PO Box 37, Essendon, VIC 3040  
Email: [secretary.vic@aies.net.au](mailto:secretary.vic@aies.net.au)

## WESTERN AUSTRALIA

Email: [secretary.wa@aies.net.au](mailto:secretary.wa@aies.net.au)

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- To facilitate full interchange of concepts and techniques amongst members.
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# AIES CONTACTS

<b>General Enquiries</b>	Email: enquiries@aies.net.au	National Secretary Unit 102, 141-143 Elizabeth St SYDNEY, NSW, 2000
<b>NATIONAL COUNCIL</b>		
President Steve Jenkins FAIES	Email: president@aies.net.au Phone: 0412 753 790	
Vice President TBA	Email: vice.president@aies.net.au	
National Secretary Robert Maul LFAIES	Email: secretary@aies.net.au Phone: 0400 521 304	
National Treasurer Jenny Crump MAIES	Email: treasurer@aies.net.au Phone: 0418 726 224	
National Membership/Systems Administrator Wayne Coutts MAIES	Email: membership@aies.net.au Phone: 0458 410 998	PO Box 2469 CHERMSIDE QLD 4032
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Secretary Gordon Blair FAIES	Email: secretary.nsw@aies.net.au Phone: 0413 137 761	PO Box 4019 KINGSWAY WEST NSW 2208
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Acting President Grant Coultman-Smith MAIES	Email: president.vic@aies.net.au Phone: 0402 457 535	
Secretary Richard Lodder MAIES	Email: secretary.vic@aies.net.au Phone: 0406 393 650	PO Box 37 ESSENDON VIC 3040
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